

On the Aversion of Men of Taste

enlarge his freedom in grand mental enterprise, has been, for presuming in a certain degree to create for himself a peculiar diction, charged by Johnson with writing in a "Babylonish dialect." * And Johnson's own mighty force of mind has not defended his Roman dialect from being condemned by all men of taste. The magic of Burke's eloquence is not enough to beguile the perception, that it is of less dignified and commanding tone, has less of the claim to be "for all time," than if the same marvellous affluence of thought and fancy had been conveyed in a language of less arbitrary, capricious, and mannerish character. To revert to the theological peculiarity of dialect ; we may look in vain for any theologian of genius so supereminently powerful as might impress on it either a dignity to overawe, or a grace to conciliate literary taste. But indeed if we had such a one he would not attempt it. If he disregarded the classical standard, and chose to speak in an alien dialect, it would be a dialect of his own, formed in still more complete independence and disregard of the model which so many theological teachers have concurred to establish for the language of religion.

It may be said, perhaps, that any such splendid intervention, in authorization of that model, can be spared ; for that the class contains so many of great ability, and so many more of great piety and usefulness, that the peculiar diction will maintain its ground. Probably it will do so, in a considerable degree, for a long time. But no numbers, ability, or piety, will ever redeem it from the character of barbarism.

LETTER IV.

IN defence of the diction which I have been describing, it will be said that it has grown out of the language of the

* " Of Milton . . . may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that he wrote no language,' but has formed what Butler calls a Babylonish dialect, • in itself harsh and barbarous, but made "by exalted genius and extensive learning the vehicle of so much instruction, and so much pleasure, that, like all other lovers, we find grace in its deformity."—JOHNSON, *Life* or *Milton.*" > J J